

## Note on a Possible Reference to Ikaros in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins

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The Vinaya - i.e. the body of text dedicated to monastic discipline - of the Mūlasarvāstivādins contains a large quantity of fables. One of these fables has a striking similarity to the Greek story of Daidalos and Ikaros. The legend is about a young man who goes flying with a flying-machine: a wooden peacock. In his juvenile eagerness he disregards the warnings of his father who is a master of mechanical art. He goes flying too far off and reaches the ocean where it is raining. The joints of his device get wet and he falls to his death.

The special nature of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is well known. It differs from the other Buddhist Vinayas in that it contains a large quantity of fables. Some of these stories are about Devadatta, the evil cousin of the Buddha who tries to seize power in the Saṃgha. The legend about Devadatta is primarily found in the Skandhaka, where it introduces the Saṃghabhedavastu, and in the Vibhaṅga.<sup>1</sup> The exact details and loci of the legend vary somewhat among the extant Vinayas.<sup>2</sup> One of the fables about a former life of Devadatta and the Buddha has a striking similarity to the Greek story of Daidalos and Ikaros.

The best overview of the Jātakas of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is undoubtedly: Panglung, Jampa Losang (1981). *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya Analyziert auf*

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<sup>1</sup>"The legend of Devadatta plays a role above all in two passages of the Vinaya, in the Vibhaṅga concerning the tenth Saṃghāvaśeṣa offence, and in the Saṃghabhedavastu of the Skandhaka." Frauwallner, Erich. (1956) *The earliest Vinaya and the beginnings of Buddhist literature*. Rome. p.117.

<sup>2</sup>"At an early time, probably even before Aśoka, this legend was included in the Vinaya, by some schools in the Vibhaṅga and by others in the Skandhaka, and was mixed up with older stories." Frauwallner. p.118.

*Grund der Tibetischen Übersetzung.* Tokyo. On page 125 Panglung gives a highly condensed version of the story which is the subject of this article. The story is found in vol.IV of the Dulva of the Tibetan Kandjur and is mentioned among other Tibetan Jātakas in: Rockhill, W.W (1897). *Tibetan Buddhist Birth-Stories: Extracts and Translations from the Kandjur.* Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol.18 (first half), p.1 ff. The story is translated from the Tibetan in: Rockhill, W. W. (1884). *Life of the Buddha and the Early History of His Order.* London. p. 108. The Sanskrit version is found in: Gnoli, Raniero (1978). *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu.* Part II. Roma. p.269-270. Dutt has the same version in Devanāgarī script in: Dutt, Nalinaksha (1942-1950). *Gilgit Manuscripts.* vol. IV. Srinagar. p. 246. The story is also found in the Taisho Issaikyo 1450. The Chinese version is translated into French in: Chavannes, Édouard (1962). *Cinq Centes Contes et Apologues. Extraits du Tripitaka Chinois.* Paris. Vol. II. p. 378-380. The following translation is based on Raniero Gnoli's edition of the Gilgit manuscript:

"In the old days, monks, in some mountain hamlet there lived a master of mechanical art. He took a wife from a family of the same standing. He amused himself with her, he enjoyed her and he attended to her. After some time of amusement and enjoyment and attendance she became pregnant. When eight or nine months had passed she gave birth; a boy-child was born. In his third week on the twenty-first day a birthday-festival was duly held and the proper naming-ceremony of his family was arranged. He was raised, he grew, he got big. Then his father died. He began to learn the mechanical art of another master of mechanical arts in a mountain hamlet near by. He wished to marry the daughter of a householder in another mountain hamlet. He [i.e. the householder] said: "If you come on that day I will give [you my daughter], otherwise not." He announced to the master of mechanical art: "Teacher, in that mountain hamlet there is a householder. I wish to marry his daughter. He said "if you come on that day I will give [you my daughter], otherwise not"". The master of mechanical art said: "Son, if that is the case, the two of us go. I will ask." With him he mounted a wooden peacock and on that very day on which the deadline was set he arrived in the mountain hamlet. When this was seen there was great amazement. When he had married the daughter, he mounted the machine again and went back to his

own home. He [i.e. the teacher] took the machine, gave it to the mother and said: "This son of yours does know the use of the machine when it is in motion, but not how to stop. You must not give him the machine." Again and again he said to his mother: "Mother, give me the machine, I will convert the big crowd of people. She said: "Son, your master says: "He does know the use when it is in motion, but not how to stop. Do not give [it to him], lest he shall come to ruin by evil course." Therefore I will not give [it to you]." He said: "Mother, I know both the motion and the stopping. However, that master will not give [it to me] because of envy." Mothers are light-minded. Allured she gave [it to him]. He geared up the machine and departed. The big crowd of people was pleased. Then he was seen by the master of mechanical art. He said: "He is gone. He will not return again." The more he geared up in his eagerness, the farther off he went until he came to the great ocean. In the great ocean the god always rains. The joints got wet. By evil course he came to ruin. A god uttered these verses:

"He who does not grasp the words the way they are taught of the one who wishes him well and cares about his welfare he is carried off by a wooden bird; having no leader he does not listen to anyone." The Lord said: "What do you think, monks? That master of mechanical art was me at that time. That pupil of his was Devadatta at that time. *Then*, he did not listen to my word and by evil course he came to ruin. *Now*, although advice being given by me, he did not listen and by evil course he came to ruin."

The story of this Jātaka is the following: 1) A master-mechanic makes a flying machine for his step-son. He has a bad feeling about the boy flying on his own and he gives instructions not to let him fly alone. 2) The step-son goes flying in spite of warnings. He is exhilarated and flies too far off. 3) Because he did not listen to the words of his step-father he falls into the sea. The reason for his ruin is that the joints holding the flying-machine together are dissolved by rain. Compare this sequence of events with the story of Daidalos and Ikaros: 1) Daidalos, the master-mechanic, makes wings for himself and his son, Ikaros. He has a bad feeling about the boy flying and he instructs the boy on how to fly. 2) The son forgets the warnings of the father. He is exhilarated and flies too high and too close to the sun. 3) Because he does not listen to the words of his

father he falls into the sea. The reason for his ruin is that the joints holding the wings together are dissolved by the heat of the sun. The correspondences between the Buddhist Jātaka and the Greek legend close that it is reasonable to ask whether the Jātaka is originally the legend of Daidalos and Ikaros.

## II

The characters of the Greek legend, Daidalos and Ikaros, father and son, belonged originally to two separate traditions. Ikaros is probably the eponymos of the demos Ikaría of Pentelikon.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Daidalos is probably the eponymos of the Daidalidai, a small demos of the Attican phyle Kekropis.<sup>4</sup> Daidalos is "Der mytische Repräsentant des ältesten Kunsthandwerks, später auch der archaischen, für das Beiwerk vielfach Gold und Elfenbein verwendeten Holzplastik, zuletzt auch Meister besonders complicierter altertümlicher Bauanlagen."<sup>5</sup> Thus, he is closely associated with Hephaistos and Homer calls Hephaistos' craft *daidallein* and his products *daidala* or *daidalea*.<sup>6</sup>

The oldest mention of Daidalos' connection with Crete in literature is found in the Iliad XVIII 590 ff. Here he is mentioned in passing in the description of the wonderful shield that Hephaistos fashiones for Achille's mother after her son's armour had been lost when Patroclus was slain by the Trojans. Homer tells us that Hephaistos wrought a xoron on the shield like the one Daidalos is said to have fashioned for Ariadne in Cnosus. There has been a controversy over wether xoros refers to a dance-floor or an artful picture. However, there is no reason to doubt that there actually was some kind of anathema for Ariadne in Crete and that this work was generally ascribed to Daidalos.<sup>7</sup> Neither is there any good reason to view these particular verses as younger than the rest of the description of the great and sturdy shield that the strong-armed Hephaistos fashioned from "stubborn bronze and tin and precious gold and silver"<sup>8</sup>. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the figure

<sup>3</sup>Paulys real encyclopedie der classischen altertumswissenschaft, IX Band.,p. 986.

<sup>4</sup>Paulys, p.1994.

<sup>5</sup>Paulys p.1994. References omitted.

<sup>6</sup>Paulys, p. 1996.

<sup>7</sup>Paulys, p.1999.

<sup>8</sup>Homer. *Iliad*. Loeb Classical Library. vol.II. p.323.

of Daidalos, the master artisan, and his stay in Crete was widely known in the seventh century B.C. The oldest reference to the story of Daidalos making wings and flying is a depiction on an Attican vase from the first half of the sixth century.<sup>9</sup>

The stories of Ikaros and Daidalos originated as two separate traditions and the association of Ikaros with Daidalos is a secondary development. When did the separate traditions merge into one? The first association of Ikaros and Daidalos in Greek literature is found in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* IV.2.33. Here Xenophon puts the story in the context of the discussion between Socrates and the young Euthydemus concerning education. For Socrates, the well-known story of Daidalos proves that wisdom is not always a good thing. Daidalos' skill made him a captive of King Minos and his brilliant escape resulted in the death of his son. In Arrian's *Anabasis* VII.20.3, Aristobulus gives the outlines of the story exactly as we know it. Aristobulus tells us that Alexander gives the name of *Ikaros* to an island near the mouths of the Euphrates after an island in the Aegean sea by that name. According to Knaack, this version of the story has a pre-alexandrian source, and he has the following opinions on what the source might be:

“Dass er unter den Dichtern zu suchen ist, bedarf wohl keines Nachweises. Da das Epos nicht mehr in Betracht kommt, in der Lyrik die Sage, so viel wir wissen, nicht behandelt war, so bleibt allein das Drama übrig. Auch hier verengt sich, wenn man nicht mit unbekanntem Grössen rechnen will, der Spielraum. Es kommen drei Stücke in Betracht: von Sophokles Daidalos und Kamikoi, von Euripides die Kreter. Von den beiden ersten wissen wir zu wenig, um über den Gang der Handlung urtheilen zu können;”<sup>10</sup>

Knaack points to the opinions of other scholars - Körtes, Kuhnerts, Roberts and Hollands - concerning the contents of Euripides' *Cretes*. His conclusion is that this play is most likely the earliest source of the story of Ikaros and Daidalos in the form we know it.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Paulys, p.1998.

<sup>10</sup>Knaack, G. "Zur Sage von Daidalos und Ikaros." In *Hermes* XXXVII. 1902, p.601.

<sup>11</sup>ibid.

## III

If our story of the master mechanic really is an Indian version of the Ikaros legend it is not the only instance where a Buddhist tale has a parallel in Greek literature. For instance, Rockhill has mentioned the identity of the story of the Buddha as a clever thief with a story in Herodotus II.121.<sup>12</sup> Herodotus informs us that it is an Egyptian story.<sup>13</sup> As to the truth-value of the tale, he says that he only records what he is told by others; he does not seem to believe the story himself.<sup>14</sup> The fact that an Indian tale has close parallels in the traditional tales of other peoples is neither new nor surprising. How did such stories get from one part of the world to another?

According to Knaack, Euripides' *Cretes* was the earliest locus of the story of Ikaros and Daidalos as we know it. From Aristobulus it is clear that this version of the story was well-known at the time of Alexander and that Alexander himself or somebody near him knew it. However, the contacts between India and the West did not start with Alexander. According to K.Karttunen the first contacts between India and the West belongs to the third millennium "in the wide commercially and culturally interacting world of Sumer, Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha."<sup>15</sup> Wood, copper, gold, silver, precious stones, ivory, pearls and coloured birds were among the goods which were transported from the civilization of the Indus valley to the earliest civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf both along trade routes over the Iranian plateau and by the more important sea routes.<sup>16</sup> However, this contact did not last.

"After the Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian periods the trade seems to have slowly withered. ...More than a millennium followed with apparently little or no contact between South Asia and the West (with the exception of Iran). When it began again

<sup>12</sup>Rockhill, W.W (1897). *Tibetan Buddhist Birth-Stories: Extracts and Translations from the Kandjur*. Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol.18 (first half), p. 3. Rockhill mentions the story in his *Life of the Buddha* only in a footnote (p.56) and does not include it in his translation. For a short version of the tale, see Panlung p.96.

<sup>13</sup>Herodotus, book II, 123.

<sup>14</sup>ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Karttunen, Klaus (1989). *India in Early Greek Literature*. Helsinki. p.11.

<sup>16</sup>ibid. pp.13-14.

it was a completely new story,..."<sup>17</sup>

Karttunen discusses the possibilities of later contacts between India and the West during the Assyrian, the Neo-Babylonian and the Achaemenian periods. He concludes "For Indo-Western relations there is much indisputable evidence, but only from the Achaemenian period."<sup>18</sup> There certainly were contacts between Greece and Northwest India through the Achaemenid Empire. Still, these contacts were not as intense as they would become later.

It seems reasonable to assume that the tale was brought to India with or after Alexander's campaign in the East. Aristobulus shows that Alexander and his companions knew the story of Daidalos and Ikaros. But Alexander's mission was not the spreading of Greek tales. It is more likely that the story found its way into the Indian literature at a later stage when contacts between Greeks and Indians were more permanent and less hostile. Lamotte points to the establishment of Indo-Greek kingdoms in North-western India as an important factor in the communication of legends.<sup>19</sup> Lamotte says that the more serious issues of philosophy and religion did not have much impact either way, but there was one point where the exchange of ideas was easy: "celui des fables, des apologues, des paraboles, des fabliaux, des ballades, des récits d'aventures, des contes pour rire ou des contes de fées."<sup>20</sup> This exchange of ideas in the sphere of folklore was important for Buddhist literature:

"Au cours de siècles, la légende bouddhique puisa une partie de son inspiration dans cette littérature orale composite et, dans sa biographie des vies antérieures du Buddha comme de son existence dernière, se multiplieront des passages rappelant de près ou de loin une légende grecque, un conte d'Hérodote, un récit oriental ou biblique, une péripécie évangélique."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup>ibid. pp.14+15.

<sup>18</sup>ibid. p.31.

<sup>19</sup>Lamotte, Étienne (1976). *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*. Louvain la Neuve. p.486.

<sup>20</sup>ibid.

<sup>21</sup>ibid. p.487.

## IV

When was the legend introduced into the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins? The legend was part of the Sanskrit Vinaya material which was translated into Tibetan and Chinese, and we can take this translation as the *terminus ante quem* for the fixation of the story in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. R.Gnoli has the following to say concerning the translation of the Sanskrit Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins:

"It was rendered into Tibetan by Sarvajñadeva, Dharmākara, and Vidyākaraprabha (the two latter doubtless Kashmiri), assisted by Lotsava Dpal-gyi-lhun po, in the reign of K'ri sron lde btsan, between the end of the 8th century, and the beginnings of the 9th century."<sup>22</sup>

The incomplete and inferior Chinese version (T 1442-1451) was made by I-ching in the years 700-712.<sup>23</sup> As mentioned above, the Chinese version also includes our legend (T 1450), and it has been translated into French by Chavannes. It is clear, then, that the story was fixed in the Sanskrit Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins before 700 A.D. However, establishing a *terminus a quo* seems less easy. Frauwallner believed that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins was an early, independent work. He points to a passage in the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa which mentions two Vinayas. One is the Vinaya of Mathurā which includes also the Avadāna and Jātaka. The second is the Vinaya of Kaśmīr which has rejected the Avadāna and Jātaka and contains only the essentials.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of the passage in the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa he identifies the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins with the Vinaya of Mathurā and the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādins with the Vinaya of Kaśmīr.

Frauwallner argues for the independence of the Mūlasarvāstivādins school and its Vinaya from the schools that, according to him, were the results of the missions of Aśoka, i.e. the Sarvāstivādins, the Dharmaguptakas, the Pāli school and the Mahīśāsakas.<sup>25</sup> The Mūlasarvāstivādins constituted an old community with their own Vinaya - namely the Vinaya of

<sup>22</sup>Gnoli, Raniero (1977). *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*. Part I. Roma, p.XXIII.

<sup>23</sup>ibid.

<sup>24</sup>v. Frauwallner p.26.

<sup>25</sup>ibid. p.2.

Mathurā mentioned in the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa - and they played an important and independent role already at the time of the council of Vaiśālī.<sup>26</sup> If Frauwallner is right, then, our story could have entered the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins without entering the other Vinayas from some time around the Council of Vaiśālī. If, on the other hand, Frauwallner is wrong in viewing the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins as independent from other Vinayas at such an early date, the *terminus a quo* must be moved forward. Lamotte, for instance, does not agree that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is the Vinaya of Mathurā mentioned by Kumārajīva.<sup>27</sup> He says that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins was not closed before the fourth or fifth century A.D.<sup>28</sup> Of course, Frauwallner has a strong motive for taking the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins to be an old, independent tradition because his project is to link the rise of the Buddhist schools to Aśoka's mission and it seems impossible to make the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins fit in with the Vinayas of the four schools which is supposed to be the results of the mission.<sup>29</sup> C.Prebish has criticized Frauwallner's attempt to establish the Mūlasarvāstivādins as an early independent school.<sup>30</sup> He points to the fact that the name of the school appears in records only in the 7th century<sup>31</sup> and, like Lamotte, he does not seem to accept the evidence of the passage in the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa.<sup>32</sup> Prebish dismisses Frauwallner's view of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, saying:

"Despite his exhaustive presentation, Frauwallner's approach is dangerously close to reducing itself to a "if it's different, it's older" stance. ...his conclusion could have been easily reversed: that it was an independent but younger school of Buddhism than those which he associates with Aśoka's mission."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup>ibid. p.37.

<sup>27</sup>Lamotte, *Histoire*, p.196

<sup>28</sup>ibid.

<sup>29</sup>i.e. the Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka and the Pāli school. Frauwallner, op.cit. p.2.

<sup>30</sup>Prebish, Charles (1973). "Theories Concerning the Skandhaka: An Appraisal." *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXII, No.4, August 1973.

<sup>31</sup>ibid. p.672.

<sup>32</sup>ibid.

<sup>33</sup>ibid.

In his introduction to the Gilgit manuscript, R.Gnoli chooses a middle path between Frauwallner's view of an early date and Lamotte's opinion of the fourth-fifth century as a *terminus a quo*.<sup>34</sup> On the basis of the text's prediction concerning Kaṇiṣka and its tales concerning Kashmir he believes that the date of the text must be taken back to the time of Kaṇiṣka.<sup>35</sup> In his analysis of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins J. L. Panglung does not introduce an independent view concerning the dating of the text, but, like Gnoli,<sup>36</sup> he quotes Waldschmidt to show that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, is a very heterogenous work.<sup>37</sup> The period of compilation was long; the texts which constitute the extant Vinaya were "laid down in different epochs, and subsequently patched up together."<sup>38</sup>

## V

Is it possible to make any conclusive remarks regarding the date of the fixation of the legend in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins? If Frauwallner is right that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins was an independent work at the time of the council of Vaiśālī we get a very early *terminus a quo*. H. Bechert puts the question of the date of the Council of Vaiśālī into the context of the later date of the Buddha. He says: "The Council of Vaiśālī may be dated about 40 to 50 p.N."<sup>39</sup> If one tries to extract one acceptable date of the Buddha's death from the different methods and respective results of different scholars of the Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung in Göttingen<sup>40</sup> it seems that 400 B.C. is the best approximation. From these approximations, 360-350 B.C. is the earliest possible date for any Greek legend to enter the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. On the other hand, if we follow Lamotte it seems that the

<sup>34</sup>Gnoli, Raniero (1977). *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*. Part I. Roma. p.XVI ff.

<sup>35</sup>ibid. p.XIX.

<sup>36</sup>ibid. p.XX.

<sup>37</sup>Panglung, Jampa Losang (1981). *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya Analyziert auf Grund der Tibetischen Übersetzung*. Tokyo., p.XII.

<sup>38</sup>Gnoli, op.cit., p.XX.

<sup>39</sup>Bechert, Heinz (1982). The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered. *Indologica Taurinensia*, vol.X part 2. p.36.

<sup>40</sup>Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung. Edited by H.Beichert. Göttingen. 1991.

fourth or fifth century C.E. should be taken as the *terminus a quo* for the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins as an independent work. Of course, 360-350 B.C. is far too early from all viewpoints. The Buddha had been dead for only a short time, Alexander was barely born and Frauwallner's speculations about the early independence of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins are dubious. Still, even if we follow Lamotte or Gnoli, we are left with a time-span of many centuries during which the legend of Daidalos and Ikaros may have been fixed in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.

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